



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: CCASA Urges Passage of SB 20—Colorado’s Version of Erin’s Law

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Denver, CO — The Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CCASA) urges Coloradans to support the passage of SB 20—Colorado’s Version of Erin’s Law, which is in its first hearing in the Senate Education Committee this Thursday, January 29th. Erin Merryn, for whom the law is named, is a child sexual abuse survivor and activist who has been instrumental in passing similar legislation in 19 other states. Erin’s Law is designed to assist schools with education and response to child sexual abuse.

The key components of the Colorado’s SB 20 include:

1. Requiring the Colorado School Safety Resource Center to hire a new staff member. This person’s specific role will be to provide curricula recommendations and training for school personnel, youth, and parents on child sexual abuse prevention, awareness, and intervention.
2. Encouraging school districts and charter schools to adopt a child sexual abuse prevention plan, which includes comprehensive age-and developmentally-appropriate curricula for kindergarten through 12th grade students on child sexual abuse awareness and prevention.
3. Encouraging school districts and charter schools to provide professional development opportunities for school personnel in preventing, identifying, and responding to child sexual abuse and assault.

SB 20 is important to our Colorado communities, because schools are entrusted to keep Colorado’s youth safe and ensure that they are able to learn. Brie Akins, CCASA Executive Director, says “Schools cannot address the safety concerns of students if they are not well-trained and informed on how to recognize, respond, and refer cases involving child sexual abuse.” Furthermore, this bill is not overly burdensome or costly to our schools or the state.

CCASA recognizes that SB 20 is a crucial first step in combating child sexual abuse in Colorado. We know that this crime is both prevalent and often goes unreported and undetected by our schools, parents and the criminal justice system. In fact, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years-old.¹ This crime is an epidemic, and schools should have comprehensive resources for addressing the issue. Jennifer Stith, CCASA member agency, WINGS Foundation Executive Director and child sexual abuse survivor, says “As a community, we will not tolerate or ignore the sexual violation and exploitation of our most vulnerable citizens – our children. We should have passed legislation like this long ago. The time to act is now.” CCASA urges Coloradans to support this important bill for the children of Colorado who deserve safe and healthy childhoods.

For a list of agencies sponsoring SB 20, visit ccasa.org/2015-legislative-session.

¹ Finkelhor, D., Hotaling, G., Lewis, I. A., & Smith, C. (1990). Sexual abuse in a national survey of adult men and women: Prevalence, characteristics and risk factors. *Child Abuse & Neglect* 14, 19-28.

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